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Episode title: Chinook Profiles-Interview with Della Keats and Patricia Bullit

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Notes: Interviews take place at the University of Alaska- Fairbanks/ There is no definitive date, however in second interview there are several references to “Disco Era”

Summary: Episode 1: Interview with Della Keats (traditional healer from Kotzebue).

Interviewer: Paula Schiller

Della Keats begins by clarifying that she is not a witch doctor or medicine woman. Her role is to advise people on the need to see a doctor if she feels that she cannot help them. She also tends to the spiritual needs of the people of Alaska. She further informs the listener that she has no formal training and all knowledge she has learned from her own experience. She travels throughout the Arctic practicing her methods.

She states she advises a vast array of people from teachers, troopers, even “white men”. She further goes on to elaborate by telling story of a time when an “emergency” was called from Umiak that she had to respond to. When she arrived she discovered a woman writhing with tremendous back pain. Della Keats discovered that it was the principal’s wife, who was a village teacher. During her visit Della Keats states that she treated the woman as she would treat herself. Upon the rendering of her treatment the patient quickly got up and made her some tea. The patient then informed Della that in the states she had gone to a vast array of specialists and none of them had been able to alleviate her sprained back. The teacher then become the first person to give Della Keats the title of “the best doctor in the world”. After some chuckling she explains that they now call her “Dr. Della Keats”. She then explains why it is such an honor to be bestowed the title of “doctor”. When she was a little girl they used to call the “superstition doctor” a “medicine man”, so she was rather surprised that her title has evolved to: Dr. Della Keats. She then goes on to elaborate that she does not have any superstition like “medicine man” but has only faith and hope in “my good Lord”.

The questioning then shifts to the healing she provides from a spiritual aspect. Ms. Keats then goes on to explain that she treats people that have a “bad remembrance” or are “out of mind

people”. She claims further than when she has “prayed for them, they never come back no more”. Della then conveys her belief that people who have turmoil or fear need to “remember the good lord, it always help”.

Della then goes on to state her belief in death and spirituality. She voices that she is the “only left”, her parents and brothers and sisters have all died, and she is the only surviving member of her family. The interviewer asks her about her happiness, to which she replies that she can’t do anything about her own death, and therefore has no choice but to be happy. She has found that “happy is a good medicine”. (She chuckles)

The interview topic then shifts to the youth and whether they ever ask her to teach them her methods of medicine. She answers with a resounding “no”, but she talks about her practices with others. She feels that if there is no interest shown by the youth in the future her practices and knowledge will be lost. After waiting for a student to approach her she decided she will appoint her own pupil and chose a woman from Noorvik. In less than a year her pupil learned “most of it”. Della also allowed another woman from Point Hope to follow her for a year, during which time this woman also learned her technique. Della goes on to express an initial concern of the fact that the pupil from Point Hope could not read or write, in addition to her bout with nervousness. At home, Della also has an old woman who has just started out and helps her and is “a good helper too”.

The subject then goes to her attendance of the Tanana Chiefs Association in Fairbanks, among other speaking engagements. She states she “never stops working”, and responds to all emergencies at all times. There are often people waiting for her at the airport in need of immediate attention. At one point recently the interviewer explains that Della went to the hospital. Not for pain of illness, like her patients, but for “rest”.

Episode 2: Interview by Paula Schiller in which she is interviewing Patricia Bullit, a dance teacher that is part of the Artists in the Schools program. She has just completed her third tour which brought her to the Yukon Kuskokwim Delta.

Patricia begins the interview by informing the viewer that she is visiting from California. She expresses that she teaches “dance and movement”. Patricia voices that she is often misunderstood as being an instructor of “disco” or “fancy dancing” by her pupils in the different villages she is touring. With the popularity of disco she has become known as “the disco lady” in lieu of “the dancing lady” that she was previously known as. Her main interest is conveying to her students a sense of self-expression that is portrayed through dance. She accomplishes this through improvisational and creative dance. This allows the students to express their mood that day and interact with each other more effectively than a more “strict” form of dance (such as ballet). This form of dance also encourages very young children to become more aware of their bodies through body awareness exercises.

Patricia is then asked if the children's culture makes them "predisposed" to that kind of dance, or if culture plays a role in their learning of dance, and if they integrate their native dance into their impromptu dances. She explains that on occasion they may compare a move to one of the traditional moves, but on average they adjust to her style. She then communicates that she wishes they would integrate more of their "traditional Eskimo dance" in order to teach her some of their dance moves. She then talks about a variation of an Eskimo dance that she choreographed to a Stevie Wonder song. The dance instructor expresses that the aforementioned dance was a lot of hand motions and deep knee bending. This was used to teach her students the importance of storytelling through dance. There was more of an interest within the students of sharing their traditional dance methods once they learned that the instructor wanted to learn them. She hopes to instill in them that traditional native dance still has a current place in society and an interest by many people.

She then begins to discuss her background which includes teaching in a private school at Berkley that teaches Kindergarten through Sixth grade. When asked about any differences she observes due to location and culture she explains that the Native girls are much more inhibited than the girls in the Lower 48. She goes on to explain that in Eskimo dance there is a very different quality in the movement that males do versus the movements of females. Eskimo females seem to be softer and more flowing, less aggressive than males. Males are more overt and quicker than females, this could be due to the cultural rules that are played by each respectively. The lessons last for only two weeks at each location.

The interviewer then expresses a concern over whether she is "diluting" traditional dance with disco. Patricia's response is that her hope is that she is "complementing" it. Patricia feels that Eskimo dance is different than any other dance she has ever seen due to its non-locomotion. She goes on to state that she has a responsibility to not only show them what her dance is all about, but to integrate some of their dance into future performances in the Lower 48. She feels that movement and dance is universal.